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SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: PROGRESS VITAL IF OCTOBER
ELECTIONS TO TAKE PLACE

REF: A. ABIDJAN 414

[1](#)B. PARIS 2750

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4. (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Cote d'Ivoire must show progress soon on identification and disarmament if elections in October are to remain feasible, MFA Deskoff Olivier Richard stressed on April 28. The MFA was satisfied with the results of discussions A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert had in Washington concerning UNOCI and its troop levels (i.e., increase up to 1,500, linked to UNMEE). PM Konan Banny's April 10-13 visit to France focused largely on economic issues and his attempts to resuscitate French business interest in Cote d'Ivoire. Shortly before Konan Banny's visit, the French pledged to provide one million euros for election support (of which 500,000 was spent by the end of 2005 and the remaining 500,000 budgeted for 2006); 500,000 euros for professional training; and 1.5 million euros for micro-projects proposed by elements of Cote d'Ivoire's civil society. END SUMMARY.

TANGIBLE PROGRESS IMPERATIVE

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Deskoff Olivier Richard on April 28 reviewed recent developments in Cote d'Ivoire. He stressed the importance of meaningful progress on identification (for determining nationality and voter eligibility) and disarmament by the time of the next International Working Group (IWG) meeting on May 19 if there was to be any hope of holding elections in Cote d'Ivoire in accordance with the October target date. He said that the time for talking about progress in those areas, and on the demobilization and reintegration of paramilitary forces, had long passed -- "they have to show real progress if they have any expectation of elections in October." Richard expressed cautious optimism that elections could be held in October, but he said that that could happen only if progress took place "beginning right now on the roadmap."

[1](#)3. (C) Richard, who had attended the sixth meeting of the IWG on April 20 (ref A) said that France supported the group's efforts and its April 20 communique, which also stressed the importance of progress on identification, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. He noted that France similarly supported the UNSC Presidential Statement issued on April 27, which stressed the same themes. He repeated the importance of progress in these areas. A lack of progress would seriously jeopardize, if not render impossible, elections in October, he reiterated.

UNOCI

14. (C) Richard commented briefly on U.S.-France discussions on UNOCI and its prospective reinforcement. He said that MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert, who was then in Washington to discuss this issue, had informed the MFA that he and his USG counterparts had reached an understanding on troop levels (i.e., increase up to 1,500, linked to UNMEE), and that, based on what Joubert had told the MFA, the issue seemed to be settled. Richard remarked that one of France's earlier problems with linking UNOCI increases to drawdowns in other UN missions was that each mission had its own needs, and the needs of one mission should not be arbitrarily based on changes to another mission. In any case, Richard expressed relief that the issue had been resolved to the satisfaction of both sides as a result of Joubert's consultations. (See ref B for earlier GOF views on UNOCI and UNMEE.)

PM KONAN BANNY

15. (C) Richard said that Cote d'Ivoire PM Konan Banny's April 10-13 working visit to France had been a success. Konan Banny had focused primarily on economic and business issues, Richard said. He met with members of the French business sector and with members of the French community that had left Cote d'Ivoire after the events of November 2004. Richard said that Konan Banny wanted to revive French commercial interest in Cote d'Ivoire. Konan Banny's discussions with GOF officials centered on financial issues and elections support. Richard noted that France made no new pledges -- France had made its most recent commitment to enhance financial support to Cote d'Ivoire at the end of March, which Cote d'Ivoire FM Bakayoko and Minister-Delegate for Cooperation Girardin discussed further in New York on March 31. The assistance announced at that time consisted of: 1 million euros for election support (Richard explained that half of this amount covered expenditures made by the end

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of 2005, with the remainder budgeted for 2006); 500,000 euros for professional training; and 1.5 million euros for micro-projects that Cote d'Ivoire's civil society had proposed.

16. (C) Richard said that Konan Banny originally wanted to visit Paris April 10-13 and continue immediately to the U.S. and Brussels (EU). He had chosen these destinations because "that's where he thought Cote d'Ivoire was likely to obtain assistance for the elections and financial support for the economy generally," Richard explained. Konan Banny wanted to go directly from Paris to the U.S. in order to avoid appearing to be "France's man," Richard said. However, Konan Banny had to interrupt this itinerary because of the April 20 IWG meeting, which required him to return to Cote d'Ivoire. After the meeting, Konan Banny then continued his travels.

17. (C) Richard said the GOF was pleased with Konan Banny's performance as Prime Minister, especially given the difficult circumstances of his appointment and the present situation in Cote d'Ivoire. The French had worked with him before and held him in high regard. Nonetheless, however well intentioned, Konan Banny faced many challenges, the foremost being the need for all Ivoirian parties to make progress on issues such as identification and disarmament if they were indeed serious about holding elections in October.

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Stapleton